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InFocus...

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Washington, D. C. Sept. 10 Pentagon, CIA Clash Over MX

Early in August, the final meeting on MX of the National Security Council's Program Review Committee (PRC) produced an unexpected, vexing surprise when Adm. Stansfield Turner, USN (Ret.), Director of Central Intelligence, took a dissenting, strongly negative position on the survivability and verifiability of modern land-based ICBMs. Admiral Turner's opposition, highly placed sources claim, was based far more on broad philosophical considerations than on intelligence analyses.

What made the intelligence boss's stance perplexing was the fact that the Defense Department and the Air Force, several days prior to the PRC meeting, held a day-long review at CIA headquarters with senior specialists of that agency on the so-called closed-loop or "racetrack" basing mode of MX (see "In Focus," September '79). The CIA officials participating in the review concluded that this MX basing mode provided for adequate security, survivability, and SALT-related verifiability.

Admiral Turner's subsequent negative stance in fact reversed the earlier findings of the agency's technical experts and, according to congressional sources, appeared to center on the contention that land-based ICBMs ought to be abandoned in favor of an expanded dyad whose sea-based element should be strengthened beyond the levels currently planned by the Administration. Admiral Turner's opposition to the MX basing mode recommended by the Pentagon, and okayed by the State Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and the National Security Council staff, initially caused a mood of doom and gloom among MX advocates. At least one principal member of the PRC reportedly favored deferring a decision on the MX program.

But rapid and forceful action by Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, White House Assistant for National Security, led to an in-depth critique of Admiral Turner's arguments against MX. Reportedly, they were

While there was no explicit request of the intelligence boss to revise his views, there was conveyed to him the implicit recommendation that he deal with the MX issue in terms of direct intelligence factors rather than on the basis of indirect, notional concerns.

Apparently because of the unified, broad opposition organized by Dr. Brzezinski, Admiral Turner decided eventually to retract his original position in a secret communication to the PRC. This document reportedly reflected a broad tolerant position on the MX weapon system. This reversal opened the door to a full meeting of the National Security Council on MX, presided over by President Carter on September 5. The meeting culminated in the decision to start full-scale engineering development of both the ten-warhead, 190,000-pound missile and its closed-loop survivable basing mode. The President announced that the first MX squadron is to achieve operational status in 1986. All 200 weapons will be operational by 1989. Cost of the system is estimated at \$33 billion.

Republicans Urge Restructuring of Intelligence Community

The Republican National Committee, following a detailed study by its special intelligence panel, has called for restructuring the US intelligence community, including creation by Congress of a Joint Committee on Intelligence. The Republican body, with obvious partisan gusto, charged that "if we were to continue to try to work with the Administration's proposed intelligence charter . . . we would in effect be accepting the initial logic of those who believe their mission to be that of 'chaining the rogue elephant' of American intelligence. By accepting their charter, we would in effect be accepting their curiously biased view that the main threats to our liberties come from our own government instead of from our external enemies."

Alleging that a wide range of deficiencies mars the Administration's proposed intelligence charter (known as the "National Intelligence Reorganization and Reform Act of 1978")

the Republican National Committee's counterproposal calls for a chief intelligence advisor to the President who would provide liaison and guidance to the intelligence community without participating in the national intelligence estimates. The intelligence advisor would also give Congress the President's views on intelligence matters and serve as the intelligence community's sole contact with the news media.

The Republican plan recommends further that the several agencies making up the intelligence community be headed by directors whose terms of office would overlap administrations to increase independence and depoliticize the intelligence process. The clandestine branches of the various intelligence agencies would be merged into a specialized "Foreign Operations Service," charged with secret intelligence gathering, covert operations, and counterintelligence abroad. This service "would be wholly clandestine; every agency of the US government would be required to furnish the [Foreign Operations Service] with full credentials, working assignments abroad for 'cover,' and full cooperation. New legislation should also provide immunity for American corporations and other entities in the private sector in connection with any lawsuits directed against them for permitting intelligence officers to use their activities as a 'cover.' Finally, the law should neither inhibit nor prohibit any American citizen from lending assistance to his country's clandestine intelligence if he so desires."

The Republican group found pervasive flaws in the way National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) are arrived at. Asserting that "nothing has so endangered the United States" as the NIEs' chronic underestimation of the Soviet Union's strategic buildup, the Republican group characterized these misassessments as "an intelligence abuse of the first magnitude." The Republican task force called for reestablishing the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board that was disbanded by the Carter Administration—or a similar permanent agency—to perform a constant "audit" of national intelligence resources and to assure that "its own opinion and counsel reach the President, his top advisors, and the Congress free of any institutional, organizational, or policy bias."

The Republican group also proposed that more than one element of the intelligence community author